



# **HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: Alicia Whitehead**  
**Office: 713-495-7906**  
**Pager: 713-607-3930**

## **Firefighter of The Year Honored**

The Independent Insurance Agents of Houston (IIAH), announced their selection of Firefighter Abel Sarabia as the Firefighter of the Year from one of five Houston firefighter finalists, Jan. 12, 2005 at 11:30 a.m. at the Westchase Hilton Hotel, 9999 Westheimer.

This is the 27<sup>th</sup> year IIAH has worked in conjunction with HFD to recognize the commitment of firefighters and paramedics who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in emergency situations.

Firefighter Sarabia was chosen for his heroic efforts during a building fire in April 2004. Firefighters responded to an early morning ballroom fire and after entering, conditions deteriorated. Three of the six firefighters in the structure made it safely outside, one being Sarabia. He quickly realized that all crew members were not accounted for and without hesitation re-entered the building. He found one unconscious captain and pulled him outside. He then re-entered the structure and helped another captain out of the structure to safety.

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*More about the other finalist:*

Senior Captain George Lowdermilk has served with HFD for more than 50 years. He has been actively involved in numerous firefighter related organizations such as the Houston Firefighter's Federal Credit Union, the retirement fund, the Dennis Holder Scholarship fund, the Benevolent Fund and the Houston Firefighters Union.

Firefighter Joe Reyes came to the aid of a neighbor in the middle of the night on February 8, 2004. After being alerted to the house fire, Reyes forced entry into the burning house and found the disabled occupant unconscious on the floor. He pulled him from harm's way and administered first aid until HFD units arrived.

Firefighter Jason Brown was driving near the Galleria on July 13, 2004 when he witnessed a cement truck flip and land on the cab of a Ford F-350. He stopped to render aid and found the occupant of the pickup truck in critical condition. Brown performed patient assessment and took steps to ensure the man's airway. He continued patient care and discovered that the patient was a recently retired HFD Senior Captain.

Firefighter James Galindo responded with Rescue 42 to a motor vehicle accident in southwest Houston on November 27, 2003. A pickup truck was nose down in a hole made by construction workers. An aerial ladder was extended over the hole and the rescue teams set up rigging on the tip of the ladder to lower a rescuer down. Galindo was lowered into the whole and attempted to make contact with the driver. He pulled the intoxicated driver out and outfitted him in a harness. The driver was then pulled to safety.

The 2004 recipient was presented with a plaque and a \$750.00 cash award. Assistant Fire Chief Rick Flanagan and other department dignitaries assisted with the presentation.

